DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 123 775 EA 008 331

TITLE	The CNS School Evaluation Model.
INSTITUTION	Center for New Schools, Inc., Chicago, Ill.
PUB DATE	31 Dec 73
NOTE	14p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Center for New Schools, 59 East Van Buren, Chicago, Illinois 60605 ($1.35)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Involvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation; *Evaluation Methods; Experimental Programs; *Formative Evaluation; *Models; *Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS	Center for New Schools; *CNS Evaluation Model

ABSTRACT

This publication discusses a school evaluation model developed by the Center for New Schools (CNS) for use in evaluating Cleveland's New School. Section 1 describes three key principles that underlie the CNS model and discusses the rationale behind each of those principles. The three principles include (1) facilitating community participation in school evaluation, (2) using a formative evaluation approach that encourages school improvement, and (3) using an eclectic multimethod approach to evaluation that employes carefully trained and supervised participant observers. The final section presents a step-by-step outline of the work plan for implementing CNS evaluation model at New School. (JG)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED123775

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

CNS

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

THE CNS SCHOOL EVALUATION MODEL

Center for New Schools
431 South Dearborn/Suite 1527
Chicago, Illinois 60605
312/922-7436

PI. 35

December 31, 1973

EA 006 331

THE CNS SCHOOL EVALUATION MODEL

The CNS model for evaluating school programs evolved from the experience of the Executive Associates in evaluating educational programs in the late 1960s. As part of our work in establishing Metro High School, we developed and implemented a very intensive research program on that school. As described in the proposal, we are now completing the analysis of the Metro data collected over a two year period. When we received requests to evaluate new schools, we knew that the Metro model was too expensive. The CNS model for school evaluation, then, is built upon the research principles of the Metro evaluation, modified to meet the resources of schools, in a manner consistent with CNS ideas about how CNS can be effective in promoting change. As we described in the proposal, we see this model as an evolving one to be refined by actual experience in terms of using it in the field, and by subjecting it to criticism by practitioners and researchers. The following description is of the model as we are applying it to New School in Cleveland at the present time. The first section describes the rationale behind three key principles of the model and the second section describes the specific steps. Our work in using the model at New School is progressing on time and very successfully to date.

Three Underlying Principles

Three principles underlie the evaluation model:

1. The School Community as Co-Evaluator.

   The most significant evaluation is likely to result when the participants of the community being looked at are active in determining what issues

and processes should be concentrated on. Their participation in the inquiry process is also important as it reduces costs and increases the participants' capabilities to perform continuous evaluation functions which they normally are dependent on outsiders for.

2. Evaluation as Formative Feedback.

Information about how and why something happens is more useful than information that simply indicates that it did happen. Information should be gathered in a way that facilitates the community's use of the data and as quickly as possible.

3. The Eclectic Multi-Method Approach to Evaluation.

Sensitive and useful information about a community is most likely to result from an eclectic approach to methodology which focuses on the problems to be solved and which gathers strength from a variety of methodologies.

1. School Community as Co-Evaluator.

Evaluation attempts often fall victim to the obstacles of either too much inside perspective or too much outside perspective. The internal evaluator without external perspective often becomes too caught up in the daily reality of the organization to see the emergence of important questions. He* is often oversocialized to the norms and mores of the community. His

*Throughout this proposal the male pronoun is used for convenience. There is no assumption about what sex the people should actually be.

attempts to evaluate often turn into solidarity statements reaffirming the values and practices of the community.

The external evaluator suffers from other severe problems. Typically, he comes for a short time, makes some measurements, leaves, and writes a report. What he looks at may derive from a superficial understanding of the school's goals or it may derive from his own priorities about what is important. The usual reactions of community members to this kind of evaluation are that the important issues were not inspected, that the evaluation misses the richness of what goes on, and that the evaluation is not very useful. The evaluator is seen at best as a complete outsider and at worst as a hostile judging invader. The evaluator's ability to interpret events and his access to information are limited by these perceptions.

Most school evaluation in the past has been done by external evaluators, with the hope of achieving an objective judgment of the program's worth. This hope has been attacked recently by several social scientists. This recent criticism suggests that the search for "objectivity" is elusive at best, and that even the choice of working from an "external perspective" is a value loaded act (eg. Bruyn, 1966).

The Center for New Schools tries to establish its role somewhere in between. We believe that a fruitful evaluation must be conducted within the framework of the community's values. Otherwise it is unlikely that the evaluators will be able to analyze the community on its own terms or give the community useful information.

The error of oversocialization must be avoided. The evaluators, while working within the value commitments of the community, must maintain an identity separate from direct community participants. They must stay somewhat apart in order to provide an outside perspective that can help the community.

Center for New Schools staff, for example, have had extensive experience participating in and studying schools similar to New School. These schools, while sharing many of the same goals and process commitments as New School may have had different experiences. The evaluators use this richness of past experiences, then, to add to the information that comes directly from New School.

We plan to establish this insider/outsider evaluation and to facilitate the community's participation as co-evaluator through the following steps. CNS will make an initial field visit of several days to New School. During this visit we will seek out the stated and unstated concerns of the community. We will conduct informal interviews of all segments of the community, listen to the concerns expressed in conversations between community members, observe the formal and informal activities of the participants, and generally try to understand the spirit of the community.

Only after this initial acquaintance process can we tentatively identify several substantive foci for the evaluation. While these issues will come directly from the concerns of community members themselves, they might include for example the following questions: What goals is New School successfully achieving? Why is New School successful with these goals and less successful with others? What problems exist in the school? Why do these problems exist? How are various kinds of students (teachers) dealing with counseling groups (or any other program element)? Are students learning in New School? How is information about the school communicated within the community?

Another way the joint evaluator relationship is promoted is through the use of community members or information gatherers wherever possible. Members have a wealth of background experience in the community which facilitates their access to information. They have rap-

port with other members which an outsider would have to spend much time building. Similarly, they have knowledge of the language and concrete experiences of the community which serves as a backdrop to what people say and do.

Therefore, CNS involves community members in the entire information collection process. We consult with members in the design of questionnaires and interview schedules. In most cases, community members administer these instruments. The use of participant observation similarly guarantees the active participation of the community in the collection of information.

We train and support the co-evaluators so that they will be sensitive to the information they gather and can avoid the dangers of oversocialization. We co-ordinate and supervise these people-offering help where needed and constantly providing perspectives to enrich the data gathering. Finally, we monitor the data being gathered and provide guidance for changed foci where necessary.

2. Evaluation as Formative Feedback.

The usual approaches to evaluation of educational settings have concentrated on what is called "summative evaluation" (Bloom, Hastings, and Maddaus, 1972). In this model, certain output variables are specified and measured at the end of some period. The evaluation attempts to "sum up" the accomplishments or lack of accomplishment.

Several deficiencies can be noted with this method. The information often comes too late to help the people in the setting to improve their programs. Furthermore, the method of gathering information is not designed to provide assistance. Summative evaluation attempts to tell to what degree various goals were achieved, but it rarely gives any clues about why or how those levels were achieved. Also it does not usually give any indication of how different groups of people reacted to the program.

"Formative evaluation" is an alternative approach. Its intent, in addition to providing information about effects, is to generate insights, helpful to the organization, during the process of evaluation rather than just at the end. Also it is designed to gather a kind of detailed information that is linked close enough to the daily reality so it becomes of immediate use to people in the setting.

CNS promotes formative evaluation in several ways. A primary hope is that the evaluation will stimulate an organizational self-study process that continues beyond the formal involvement of CNS.

Many of the processes described in the previous section also support formative evaluation. The co-evaluator relationship encourages the community's willingness and eagerness to use the information gathered. The initial field visit stimulates community members to increase their critical thinking about their activities and reactions. Individuals in schools like New School are usually introspective about their organization long before formal evaluation starts; the visit of an outside agency like CNS encourages this indigenous process, gives tools and assistance to aid in the methods, and gives a framework to organize the process and make it comprehensive.

The use of community members to formulate questions and to gather information guarantees that there will be immediate feedback loops established in the community. Furthermore, the experience community members gain in the process will be useful for the evaluation that continues after the end of the CNS formal involvement. The use of participant observation as a principal method of study likewise guarantees immediate feedback to the community. Successful participant observation requires constant interaction with community members.

CNS will institute formative evaluation in two direct ways. During the period of involvement, we will run two feedback workshops with the community. Based on emerging

insights, we will atrempt to stimulate thought and action designed to help members move toward their goals. Finally, CNS will write its reports with the aim of serving the school in its further growth and development.

3. Eclectic Multi-Method Approach to Evaluation.

Most research and evaluation in education has been based on an analytical model borrowed from the physical sciences. In this approach, the evaluator decides apriori what the relevant variables will be, designs objective methods of assessment which purposely exclude all subjectivity, applies these methods avoiding any kind of relationship with the people involved, and then withdraws to make his conclusions. Both theorists and practitioners have begun to attack these methods as missing the most important aspects of an educational program. As an alternative they oppose methods long used in anthropology and sociological field studies. (Scott, 1965.)

One complaint about the usual methods is that they are too artificial. Roger Barker (1968) and his associates have shown that human beings are affected by their surroundings. Much behavior is shaped by the physical and social context of an activity. Methods such as questionnaires, tests, and interviews, give limited kinds of information because they create their own context not necessarily related to the programs under study. Barker proposes naturalistic observation where what people say and do is observed in its real context with the evaluator being as unobtrusive as possible. Educators such as Phillip Jackson (1968) and Louis Smith (Smith & Geoffrey, 1968) have shown that this approach is expecially important in educational settings. The usual designs have missed the complexity and interrelationships that become apparent when one observes these settings wholistically.

Another complaint about traditional evaluation is that the search for objectivity forces the evaluator to neglect much that is important in understanding what happens in an organi-

zation. Philosophies of social science such as Bruyn (1966) and Glaser & Strauss (1967) assert that the meanings that people attach to goals and events and the feeling they have about them are often excluded in studies where all the variables are imported from the outside. Methods must be used which allow the community's meanings to guide the exploration. Anthropological and sociological field studies (sometimes called "qualitative") offer the best models for these methods.

Application of these qualitative methods to educational evaluation has been rare in the past. The traditional quantitative method of evaluation have been very popular because they are simple to design, relatively inexpensive to apply, and give alluringly simple results. Those, however, who want evaluation which does not do violence to the daily reality and which is useful to those actually involved in the organization are not satisfied with conventional evaluation approach. They want the kind of evaluation that pays heed to the integrity of their organizations.

CNS has developed an eclectic multi-method approach to evaluation of new school programs. The approach is eclectic in that the first question that is asked is what is the purpose of the evaluation. Methods have then been designed to gather information that is consistent with that purpose. Established research designs techniques are used to insure strength and reliability of the approaches used, and not as the predicator for those approaches. Further, we have developed an approach that relies on several methods of information collection. A multi-method approach provides greater richness of data, and a built in reliability check between the approaches. Our plan for New School includes testing, questionnaires, interviews (formal and informal), and participant observation. The detailed plan for the evaluation is presented in the next section. Since participant observation is seen as key and since it is the most unusual of the several approaches, we will describe our rationale for using it

below in more detail. The methodological feature of most importance to our approach, however, is the combination of several methodologies.

Participant observation serves as a key backdrop for the whole evaluation of the program. We plan to use a half time participant observer at New School during the evaluation period. Researchers in the past have found that participant observation is the single best approach to naturalistic study and to insuring that the evaluation stays in tune to the meanings of the community being studied.

The participant observer combines the insider/outsider perspectives. He joins a community and attempts to undergo experiences much as participants would. He becomes part of the formal and informal activities of the school. He watches what happens, he listens to what people say, he becomes trusted and experienced enough so that participants feel comfortable sharing their inner reactions with him, and he asks questions which stimulate these reactions. At the same time, he guards against becoming too much an insider. Through special techniques, he guards against over-socialization. Similarly, he makes sure that he does not adopt the perspective of any particular group in the school. He daily records his observations and reactions in a way that facilitates their use in later analysis. (The methodology of participant observation is too complex to describe fully here; for more details see McCall & Simmons, 1969).

CNS has had experience in the past using participant observation in evaluating alternative schools. We will train and supervise the participant observer in the use of these methods. In addition we will monitor the information being gathered to help interpret information gathered by other methods, to guide future data gathering, to reflect emerging concerns of the community, and to provide formative feedback to the community. The participant observer by

the special nature of his insider-outsider role constantly provides formative feedback in the questions he asks and by his very presence which stimulates the community to be introspective. In these ways participant observation serves the purposes discussed in the previous two sections.

Work Plan for Evaluation of New School

Activities to be carried out.

1. Definition of issues. 1st Site Visit.

   Task: Define the major issues for the evaluation. NS Evaluation Committee will arrange a series of meetings with staff, students, and administrators to identify key issues. CNS will conduct interviews and some informal observation to also identify issues. The Evaluation Committee and CNS will meet in two sessions to compile the final list.

2. Agreement on Evaluation Procedures. 1st Site Visit.

   Task: Decide on what methods will be used to collect, analyze and disseminate information. Methods of inquiry should be developed that are consistent with research principles, and which meet local needs in terms of cost, physical logistics, and other constraints. CNS, as described in the rationale, has definite judgements on what methods are appropriate based on our past experience. Decisions are made by CNS and the Evaluation Committee.

3. Preparation of Interview and Questionnaire Schedules.

   Task: Prepare instruments that will be used to collect and analyze the information. CNS, conferring frequently with the Evaluation Committee, develops the instruments and procedures that will be used to select respondents, and analyze information.

4. Initial Training of Interviewers and Participant Observer. 2nd Site Visit.

   Task: Train participant observer and program participants who will be collecting information. (Participant observer applicants are screened by the Evaluation Committee and formally selected by CNS.) Training of interviewers to administer interview includes a pilot interview administered by each interviewer. This process also serves as a pre-test for the interview. The participant observer is trained on site during the four day visit.

5. Follow-up Training of Participant Observer and Training of Evaluation Committee in Initial Analysis Procedures. 3rd Site Visit (2 days).

Task: Follow up on-site with the Participant Observer in terms of problems he is facing. Train evaluation committee in procedures to analyze information collected from 5.

6. First Collection of Information and Participant Observer Begins Work.

7. Staff Workshop. 4th Site Visit.

Task: Prepare workshop based on pertinent information for staff to consider. Information to be presented comes from both analysis of interviews and from observations of the Participant Observer.

8. Second Data Collection.

Task: Collect information that will indicate changes in participants skills, perspectives about the program and their participation in it. The second data collection is built around the same or similar instruments used in the first.

9. Program Participant Analysis of Data.

Task: Analyze information from second data collection and of differences between the two periods of time. Report forwarded to CNS.

10. Preparation of Second Staff Workshop and of Report to School Board.

Task: Prepare a workshop that relates to the issues faced by staff and program participants, based on information collected. Prepare formal report for Board of Education.

11. Present Workshop.

12. Provide continuing support and coordination during process of evaluation.

13. Second Year Follow Up.

Task: Provide program participants with support as they take on almost full responsibility for continuous self-evaluation, based on the training and procedures of the first year. As described in the Rationale, CNS works to insure that the schoolsusing this model develop their own capabilities, rather than remain dependent.

REFERENCES IN RATIONALE

Barker, R., Ecological Psychology, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, 1968.

Bloom, B.; Hastings, T. and Madaus, G., Handbook of Summative & Formative Evaluation. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1971.

Broyn, S., Human Perspective in Sociology. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1966.

Bradford, Gibb, Benne, T-Group Theory & Laboratory Method, Wiley, New York, 1964

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. Discovery of Grounded Theory. Chicago, Aldine, 1967.

Jackson, P. Life in Classrooms, Holt, Rinehart & Winston. New York, 1968.

McCall, C. and Simmons, J. Issues in Participant Observation. Addison-Wesley, New York, 1968.

Rogers, C. On Becoming a Person, Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 196'.

Scott, W., "Field Methods in Organizational Research", Handbook of Organizations, Rand McNally, Chicago, 1965.

Smith, C. and Geoffrey, F., Complexities of an Urban Classroom. Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, New York, 1968.